An Overview of Family Development
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The family is the smallest unit of a society and, therefore, critical to its development and maintenance. There are four major issues in the development of a family: mate selection, spousal relationships, parenting, and change. This paper reviews the literature regarding the importance and current state of the family, the four major issues related to family development, and some activities that educators and parents can implement in order to prepare children and youth for family responsibilities. The paper also discusses ways to measure student's successful development in these areas.

Despite the historic centrality of the nuclear family unit (mother, father, first-born), there are several definitions of family. According to the Population Reference Bureau (2000), "Family can be a group of people held together by birth, marriage, or adoption or by common residence or close emotional attachment. Families may include persons who claim decent from common ancestors in a lineage, a tribe or a clan" (para. 12). Although marriage often signifies the creation of a family, unofficial joining together endorsed neither by church nor state, are quite commonplace.

According to Ooms (as cited in Patterson, 2002), families serve several important functions for society. Some of these functions are: family formation and membership, economic support, nurturance and socialization, and protection of vulnerable members. However, Levine (as cited in Shaffer, 2000) states that the three basic goals that families have for their children are: survival, economic self-sufficiency, and self-actualization. These three goals are symbolic of various cultures. This shows that although there are several differences in the types of families in the world, they have certain things in common. It is the job of educators to examine the characteristics of families in order to foster most advantageous development in the children they serve (Christian, 2006).

A Changing World

The family system is a basic unit of society that has evolved along with changes in the needs and demands of the individuals and society (Kozlowska &Hanney, 2002). As the smallest social unit of society, the family has been instrumental to the development of cultures and nations. The extended family was the first social unit in the nomadic hunter/gatherer age and grew into families within tribes. The agricultural age somewhat modified the social organization (Bianchi and Casper, 2000), but what did not change until the industrial revolution was the clear connection of children and parents to a larger unit of tribes or clans. The industrial age in western society and modernity brought a decreased connection with the extended family in many cultures. An increased responsibility on the husband to generate income as a worker outside of family unit became the norm (Toffler & Toffler, 1995). In recent decades, women have joined the workforce in record numbers, putting increased pressure on both adults to provide the economic resources for the family.

In advanced industrialized societies, the fate of the nuclear family is of concern to many researchers, government officials, and citizens. Commentators ask if the family is falling apart or merely evolving into a new form (Wrigley, 2004). Indicators of family disequilibrium, such as divorces and the number of children being raised in single-parent families, are rising alarmingly. A discussion of preparing children and youth for the establishment and maintenance of a family cannot avoid these issues. Instead, relevant literature must be surveyed to clarify the issues and provide insights on how they may best be addressed.

Certainly the family has been the primary social institution for the raising of children. These children need love, support, nurturing, and discipline. In traditional westernized nations, this was thought to be best provided in a two-parent married family existing within an extended family structure (Bianchi and Casper, 2000). The two-parent nuclear family then became the prototype with the woman leaving her relatively low-paying job she got after (or before) finishing high school and taking care of children. She did this while her husband held a steady job that paid enough to support the entire family. Popularized as the American 1950's-style traditional family, around 75% of school-aged children had a parent at home full time. Family structures of this type had to support distinct gender roles and the economy had to be vibrant enough for a man to financially support a family on his own. Government policies and business practices supported this family type by reserving the best jobs for men and discriminating against working women when they married or had a baby.

In the United States, the 1960's civil rights and feminist movements resulted in a transformation in attitudes towards family behaviors (Evans, 2004). People became more accepting of divorce, cohabitation, and sex outside of marriage and less sure about the permanence of marriage. They became more tolerant of blurred gender roles, of a mother working outside of the home, and a variety of living arrangements and life styles. The transformation of these attitudes accelerated in the 1970's and 1980's. Consequently, the percentage of children with a full-time parent at home dropped somewhat in the late 1970 to around 57% and is now only around 25%.

A new ideology emerged during these years that stressed personal freedom, self-fulfillment, and individual choice in living arrangements and family commitments. Young people began to wait until their mid- to late-twenties to marry. They began to expect more out of marriage and to leave bad marriages if their expectations were not fulfilled.

The changes in norms and expectations about marriage may have followed rather than preceded increases in divorce and delays in marriage; however, such cultural changes have important feedback effects, leading to later marriage and higher divorce rates. Currently, the chances of a first marriage ending are at a high rate--40% to 50%--with the rate increasing to 50% to 60% for second marriages. When cohabitation occurs, as is often the case, the rate of breaking up increases (Evans, 2004).

Evans (2004) reported that, "of the seventy-three million children under the age of eighteen, about twenty million live in single-parent families, and perhaps as many as nine million in stepfamilies. Each year, an additional one million children experience their parents' divorce and another million plus are born out of wedlock" (p. 61). More than 25% of all families with children are headed by single parents; the majority by mothers. The difficulty of father absence has been well documented, both in variety and degree of harmful outcomes (Children, Youth & Family Consortium, 2004). For example, father absence is connected with a high rate of school dropouts of teenagers, early sexually activity and teen pregnancy, and juvenile delinquency.

The remainder of this paper will focus on more specific issues surrounding the creation and maintenance of families. Suggestions will also be made as to what educators can do to promote family development. Additionally, measurement issues will also be briefly discussed.

Issues Surrounding Family Creation and Maintenance

There are at least four major issues that must be addressed as parents, educators, and communities prepare children and youth for the responsibilities of creating and maintaining their own families as responsible, successful adults. These are 1) mate selection, 2) spousal relationships, 3) parenting and 4) changing family patterns.

Mate Selection

Selecting a mate has traditionally been influenced by a variety of variables related to propinquity (the property of being close together) and homogamy (similarity of important qualities or characteristics). While propinquity is still an important factor, it has been mitigated through geographical and social mobility and increasing use of the Internet. Mobility in post-industrialized countries, resulting from access to the means of acquiring wealth and the lessoning of restrictions of movement, is a central feature of a post-modern society (Birdsall & Graham, 1999). In the last decade, the use of the Internet has become increasingly popular as a means to meet socially and interact with other humans without leaving the home or office (Cioffi, 2003).

However, there are several weaknesses of online interactions of which young people need to be aware. First, people are unable to fully express themselves. Nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expression, and pitch or tone of voice, are absent from online interactions. A second disadvantage is the rhythms of impressions are slower and choppier than face-to-face interactions. Delays of a few seconds may convey false hesitation or disinterest. Even those people who meet via the Internet will normally meet face-to-face in order to overcome these disadvantages (Cioffi, 2003). The success rates of these services seem to be fairly low; still people are encouraged to use them due to the speedy access to a high number of potential dates. Being nice and showing respect have been the two most common ways of starting to create a real relationship in person (Brehm, Miller, Perlman, & Campbell, 2002).

The most important components of homogamy include attractiveness, age, race, religion, and socioeconomic status. There are some differences between men and women: men more value physical attractiveness while women more value instrumental qualities related to earning power (Coombs & Kenkel, 1966; Rubin, 1973). This difference has been reduced somewhat by the feminist movement, with women becoming more involved in the financial success of the family. The result is that men are placing more value on instrumental qualities of their mates.

While some information is available about attraction, much of the new information discusses additional factors, including similarities in attitudes, values, and personality as well as differences between the sexes. Though physical attractiveness is important, issues of moral character, personality, self-esteem, and self-preservation are also factored into the assessment of attractiveness.

The old saying that 'opposites attract' still rings true for many teenagers and young adults. Responsible individuals might easily connect with others more free- spirited and spontaneous. An active, take-charge person could understandably fall in love with a more accommodating, respectful, even bashful partner. Those from more chaotic, unpredictable

backgrounds seem almost magnetically drawn to those who appear to hail from more stable, "Leave-it-to- Beaver" families (Bianchi & Casper, 2000).

In addition to attractiveness, Grammer (1989) suggested another important factor for both men and women in mate selection is social distance, defined as the degree of similarity or difference between two people in terms of social status. For females, high status males are seen as better protectors and providers. Females also tend to exhibit higher aspirations in mate choice. Other factors are individually motivated or related to high self-esteem. Males with high self-esteem tend to seek out females of high physical attractiveness. When a person takes into account both attractiveness and social distance, the likelihood of ending up with a compatible partner is higher.

Unfortunately, many teenagers are pessimistic about the possibly of having a stable, two-parent home for their children and increasingly do not think that their marriage will last a lifetime (Whitehead and Popenoe, 2000). At the same time, many teenagers and young adults have become more open-minded of out-of-wedlock childbearing, single-parent childbearing and non-marital cohabitation.

Because differences between people seem to grow stronger and more disruptive as years pass, it is critically important to strive to understand and truly value a potential spouse's uniqueness and the ways that he or she thinks, feels, and experiences life events (Grammer 1989). By so doing one begins to recognize that interpersonal differences can enhance the relationship rather than becoming sources of conflict or pain. Parents and educators can assist children and youth to prepare for marriage by providing them with experiences that allow the construction of a clear sense of self-identity and interpersonal security while at the same time learning to appreciate those who have a different set of strengths and weaknesses.

Spousal Relationships

There are two major theories related to improving spousal relationships. One view is represented by Markman and Stanley (Markman, Stanley & Blumberg, 1996; Stanley, 2001). They propose that the key to good spousal relationships is communication and conflict resolution. Gottman and his colleagues disagree (Gottman, 1995; Gottman & Silver, 1999). They suggest it is establishing and maintaining a foundation of friendship and reducing the amount of criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. Using one of the theories separately, or using them in combination, researchers have developed some fairly accurate predictors of whether or not a marriage will succeed or fail.

Markman and Stanley. Markman et al. (1996) proposed that while communication and conflict resolution skills are important, communicating openly and honestly is often a tough task, especially in those relationships that are most important. Ironically, it is often with the people we care the most about, like spouses, parents, and good friends that we have the hardest time communicating clearly. In these important relationships, it is critical that each person clearly articulate what he or she wants to say, and what emotions are being experienced. If a person does not know what the other wants and/or feels, then it is difficult to know how to respond. By accurately communicating feelings and desires, not only does the listener know exactly where the other stands, is also able to facilitate being heard and understood, which sometimes is the most important part of communicating. Feeling better about the situation may be as simple as feeling that the other person understands one's position.

Markman et al. (1996) suggested that one of the most effective ways to own one's feelings and desires is to utilize "I-statements" in communications with other people. This relatively powerful strategy involves making statements like "I feel" and "I want" as opposed to "you-statements". When each person states his or her feelings and wants in terms of "I-statements", each is taking responsibility for one's own feelings and desires and sharing this with the communication partner. Each person is not blaming or trying to discern what the other wants or feels; each is simply explaining one's inner experiences and requests.

Although making "I-statements" is a relatively straight-forward way to improve communication, it takes some practice. It is easy to mistakenly blame the other person in a disguised I-statement by saying something like "I feel that you are a big jerk". This is not an I-statement, because it is blaming the other person, and does not take responsibility for one's own feelings. This message can be improved by saying "I feel badly when you…" which will likely avoid defensiveness and hostility on the part of the other person (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1996).

In order to help people communicate more effectively, practitioners have developed a formula for good communication statements that clearly state one's own feelings and wants. This formula often helps individuals when first starting to work on communication, especially when attempting to make sure that one properly owns one's feelings (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1996). The formula is: (1) "When you…", (2) "I feel…", and (3) "I want…"

The "When you…" component involves stating a specific, behavioral description of the situation that the partner wants to talk about. It is important that the partner presents the issue in a specific, behavioral description and makes an effort not to be judgmental or blaming. Examples of this piece of the statement might be "When you don't take out the garbage" or "When you walk away while I'm talking". Only one issue should be brought up at a time and the statement should be concrete and specific.

The "I feel" statement needs to be a description of the emotions that one is experiencing as a result of the situation or issue. Each partner should state his or her feelings about the issue and explain to the other person how it is affecting them internally. Examples include "I feel angry and humiliated" or "I feel frustrated". Both people should share their feelings and reveal to the other person exactly what they are experiencing. Sometimes this will be difficult and may have feelings of vulnerability as a result of disclosing their inner state, but it is a critical component of communicating effectively and developing close relationships.

"I want" involves identifying exactly what the partner wants to occur in the particular situation. Again, it is important to be specific, and identify what, behaviorally, each person wants to happen. It is best if vague terms like "supportive" and "loving" is not used, as sometimes the other person may not know what this means. Instead, state specifically what behaviors would signify that the other is being "supportive" or "loving" (Markman et al., 1996). Being clear helps the listening person to know exactly what it is that wanted.

Gottman. In contrast, Gottman (1995) stated that there are the three types of potentially satisfying marriage patterns: volatile, validating, and avoidant. Volatile couples are very emotionally expressive and remain so throughout their partnership. They are very passionate, showing both positive and negative emotions. This couple is very open, honest, and engaging with each other. They often feel like they are a team fighting against outsiders. They fight but continually work to renew the relationship if feelings are hurt. Validating couples are moderate on their emotional expressiveness and only believe in communicating these at the right times about major issues. They are friends and believe in togetherness. Avoidant couples are low-key

and tempered. They agree to disagree and often minimize the importance of problems (Gottman, & Silver,1999).

For Gottman and his colleagues (Gottman, & Silver,1999; Gottman, & DeClare, 2001), good communication and successful conflict resolution are neither central nor required for a successful marriage. Rather it depends on each partner's satisfaction, even if to outsiders it seems as if there is significant conflict. Each pattern has its drawbacks, but couples demonstrating these patterns are unlikely to divorce (Gottman, 1995). He discovered a ratio of positive to negative interactions that predict successful marriages: couples need five positive interactions for every one that is less than positive (i.e., a ratio of 5:1; Gottman, Murray, Swanson, Tyson, & Swanson, 2002). Gottman likens developing a sound marital relationship to plant growth: both need a proper environment within which to grow. These researchers add several other factors that marriages need to survive in a satisfying fashion: good moments of mutual pleasure, passion, humor, support, kindness, and generosity to outweigh the bad moments of the marriage.

One of the predictors of divorce used by Gottman and colleagues (Gottman, 1995; Gottman, & DeClare, 2001) is a couples' differing conflict resolution styles. If the individuals have varying conflict resolution styles then they may not do well. For example, if a volatile person marries an avoider then the couple would have a difficult time negotiating a common style of conflict resolution. Their frustration level would grow so high that the relationship would be unstable and unpleasant.

Similarities of Markman et al. and Gottman. Both Markman et al. (1996) and Gottman (1995) proposed four destructive qualities that are negative patterns in marriage that quickly overpower the magic ratio. Relationships with an ingrained pattern of any of these negative behaviors can be considered toxic. However, the presence of these negative patterns does not necessarily indicate that the relationship is doomed but they do mean that work is needed.

Markman et al.'s (1996) four patterns that hurt relationships are: escalation, invalidation, withdrawal and avoidance, and negative interpretations. Escalation is a process of one-up-manship. Each reply in anger increases the stake so the conditions become worse with each round. Couples who are in stable and successful relationships are typically able to nip escalation and end it. Those in tenuous relationships typically are not able to catch the escalation in time. The difficulty with escalation is while each person is attacking the other with verbal weapons, couples often damage their relationship in a way that greatly reduces recovery. If a couple's fight escalates too far then it can verge on the side of becoming dangerous. Markman et al. compare the tactics used by escalation to being equal to marital terrorism.

The second pattern that hurts relationships according to Markman et al. (1996) is invalidation. This is seen as a pattern of put-downs, either subtle or direct in nature. Invalidation is scornful in a relationship because of the belligerence and disdain that are reflected. This is also seen as an attack on a partner's character and is never seen as healthy. A subtle form of invalidation is holding back on due and expected praise, which can be made worse by injecting criticism where praise is due. According to Markman et al. (1996), "invalidation is one of the strongest predictors of divorce" (p. 30).

The third area that Markman et al. (1996) discuss is withdrawal and avoidance. These are two different ways in which people seek to ignore or get out of important discussions. Withdrawal can be physical or less obvious (such as getting quite or shutting down). Avoidance has the same goal, but the emphasis is on preventing the discussion from ever happening in the first place. It is noted that, "the common pattern of one person pursuing in a relationship, while

the other withdrawals is very destructive" (p. 34). Again, an imbedded pattern of withdrawal or avoidance is one of the most powerful predictors of divorce.

The last pattern that hurt relationships is negative interpretations. This is when an individual or both consistently hold to the belief that the motives of their partner are more negative than is truly the case. These are erroneous interpretations in a negative path. Rarely will one of these patterns exist without some of the others. Battling negative interpretations does not just mean engaging in positive thinking, but it is a matter of choice. A couple is able to view things openly, or at least in the light they are intended, or they can choose to interpret in a way that will destroy the relationship.

Gottman and Silver (1999) described four destructive qualities that quickly overpower the 5:1 magic ratio as the four horsemen of the apocalypse: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Criticism is attacking someone's personality or character, rather than a specific behavior and usually with blame. Each marriage is involved with some criticism; however, it is when the criticism becomes a pattern that it often speaks of disaster. Criticism is just a step across the line from one of the healthiest things that couples do engage in—complaining. The difference between a complaint and criticism is that a complaint is usually specific and stated for a position while criticism is usually more global, is other focused, and involves blame. One strategy to overcome this is for both to effectively use "I" messages (Markman et al., 1996)

The second destructive quality is contempt. Contempt is a step up from criticism and involves the goal to insult and psychologically abuse your partner. A few of the general signs are aggressive humor, ridicule, and body language. Couples who engage in contempt need to stop using arguments to retaliate or show superiority.

The third of Gottman and Silver's (1999) destructive qualities is defensiveness. Adopting a defensive stance is often a natural response, but it only adds to the problem in marriage. Everyone needs to become more aware of his or her defense mechanisms in order to overcome this destructive pattern. An example would be, "denying responsibility; making excuses; cross-complaining (I will meet that complaint and even up it with my retort); yes-butting; whining; and repeating oneself (over and over.)" (Gottman, 1995, p. 41). A first step for overcoming this pattern is to see this pattern in oneself. A second step would be working on becoming less defensive in order to actually listen to what their partner is saying to them.

The last area that Gottman and Silver (1999) discuss as a destructive quality is stonewalling. This is very similar to withdrawal and avoidance, but the difference is that stonewalling is a refusal to respond. When used on an occasional basis, it can actually be healthy. However, if used as a typical pattern, it is destructive. According to Gottman (1995), this message of stonewalling sends a clear message of, "I am disengaging from any meaningful communication with you" (p. 45).

Helping children and youth to develop the strategies for developing friendships, communicating, and resolving conflicts are important for developing and maintaining intimate relationships. Teaching these strategies to school-age children will assist them to appropriately solve conflicts in school and will help reduce conflicts later in life, especially in marriage and friendships.

Parenting

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviors that work individually and together to influence a child's outcome. Although specific parenting behaviors, such as spanking or reading a book out loud to a child, may influence the child's development, looking at specific behavior in isolation may be misleading. The construct of parenting style is used to capture normal variations in parents' attempt to control and socialize their children (Baumrind, 1991). These different parenting behaviors create and shape a child's emotional sense of well being. There are two points that are critical in understanding this definition. The first is that the discussion of parenting styles is meant to describe normal variations in parenting. This does not include those homes with deviant parenting, such as might be observed in abusive or neglectful homes. The second point is that parenting often revolves around issues of control. Although parents may differ in how they try to control their children or socialize them, it is understood that the crucial role of the parent is to influence, teach, and control their children.

There are four primary strategies used in parenting: authoritarian, permissive, uninvolved, and authoritative (Baumrind, 1991). These categories are also discussed in terms of the effectiveness of communities (Commission on Children At Risk, 2003), schools (Gill, Ashton & Algina, 2004), and teaching practices (Snowman & Biehler, 2006). Each of these parenting strategies reflects different naturally occurring patterns of parental values, practices, and behaviors with the most effective being an authoritative style.

Baumrind (1991) explains that authoritarian parents "are obedience- and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation" (p. 62). These parents are well-ordered with clearly stated rules and structured environments. There are two types of authoritarian parents: nonauthoritarian-directive, who are directive, but not intrusive in their power, and authoritarian-directive, who are highly intrusive.

Permissive parents are "more responsive than they are demanding. They are nontraditional and lenient, do not require mature behavior, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation" (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). These types of parents may also be divided into two types: democratic parents, who, though lenient, are more conscientious, engaged, and committed to the child and nondirective parents, who are less likely to be involved in their children's lives.

Macoby and Martin (as cited in Shaffer, 2000) state that uninvolved parents are the least effective style of parenting. These parents are undemanding in their approach. They either have rejected their children or are so involved in other activities that they do not have the time or the strength to be involved in their children's lives.

Alternately, the most effective parenting is established by authoritative parents. This type of parenting is both demanding and responsive (Baumrind, 1991):

> They monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative (p. 62).

Children of authoritative parents are more self-assured and independent. They are often better prepared to face peer pressures of adolescents and young adulthood. In a related theory, Maslow (1954, 1971) asserts that before a person can care and nurture another, he or she must have

experienced being loved and cared for. According to Maslow, even if a child is fed, sheltered, clothed, and kept safe, further involvement with others is still needed to build a foundation for healthy adulthood.

Changing Family Patterns

Looking at families as human, social systems allows educators to better understand the children and families they serve (Christian, 2006). Patterson (2002) defined a family system as comprising of two or more individuals acting as a whole unit and the relationship patterns that affect each part. These relationships are reciprocal and constantly evolving (Shaffer, 2002). Family systems theory is the study of these interactions and focuses on family behavior. Communication, interaction patterns, separateness, connectedness, loyalty, independence, and adaptation to stress are all things that are studied as it relates to the entire family and not just to the individuals in the family (Christian, 2006).

Fingerman and Berman (as cited in Christian, 2006), claimed this theory explains families' behavior in many situations. For example, a main tenet of family systems theory is that change in any level of the family functioning can produce change in other areas (Cox, & Paley, 2003). Becvar and Becvar (1999) also suggested change can occur in cycles. Developmentally within each of these cycles, there can be many sources of conflict and unity. This change can be in an individual in the family, relationships, and/or the entire family (Cox & Paley, 2003). Table 1 provides an overview of the types of family life changes that typically occur in a marriage that does not end in divorce.

However, in the modern era where multiple marriages often occur this cycle becomes much more complicated. There have been key changes in the quality and quantity of husband/wife and parent/child relationships during the course of the twentieth century (Ziehl, 2003). Traditional forms and concepts related to family are being loosened. Although the traditional nuclear family still exists, more and more reconstituted families are being created and accepted (Hunter and Schuman, 1980). Single-parent families, families of divorce, blended families, extended families, migrant families, and gay and lesbian families are seen almost everywhere (Christian, 2006).

Patterson (2002) stated that with all of this change within individuals, the chronic reconstituting of and changes within the family, and the changes in society, family stability can be undermined. In order to be more resilient, families need to achieve balance. They can do this by achieving steadiness and mastery of these four protective mechanisms: family cohesiveness, family flexibility, family communication, and family meanings. Cohesiveness refers to the degree to which the family is emotionally connected and depends on each other. Flexibility refers to the degree to which the family can vary from their patterns when an event occurs. Family communication describes the amount and ways that a family talks openly and expresses feelings to each other. The concept of family meanings refers to the ability of a family to identify their identity and worldview when discovering solutions or manage challenges in their lives. Finally, it is very important that professionals take note that balancing these concepts is extremely important, when families want to be adaptive and adjust to change. Skills in these areas should be identified and encouraged to promote the healthy development and resiliency of families.

Table 1. Stages of the Family Life Cycle

Stage	Emotion Issues	Stage Critical Terms
1. Unattached Adult	Accepting parent-adult offspring relationship	a. Differentiation from family of origin b. Development of peer relations c. Initiation of career
2. Newly Married Couple	Commitment to marriage	a. Formation of marital system b. Making room for spouse with family and friends
3. Childbearing	Accepting new member into the system	a. Adjusting marriage to make room b. Taking on parenting roles c. Making room for grandparents
4. Preschool-Age	Accepting the new personality	a. Adjusting family to needs of each child b. Coping with energy drain and lack of privacy
5. School-Age Child	Allowing child to establish relationships outside the family	a. Extending family interactions with society b. Encouraging educational achievement
6. Teenage Youth	Increasing flexibility of family boundaries to allow youth's independence	a. Shifting parent-child relationship to balance freedom and limits b. Refocusing on mid-life career and marital issues
7. Launching Center	Accepting exits from and entries into the family	a. Releasing young adult children into work, college, marriage b. Maintaining a supportive home base
8. Middle-Age Parents	Letting go and facing each other again	a. Rebuilding marriage b. Realigning family to include spouses of children and grandchildren c. Dealing with aging of older generation
9. Retirement	Accepting retirement	a. Adjusting to retirement/old age b. Coping with death of parents and spouse c. Closing or adapting family home d. Maintaining couple and individual functioning e. Supporting middle generation

What Educators Can Do

In order to help families and educate children, professionals need to be aware of the changes in families and be prepared for the accompanying physical, behavioral, and emotional adjustments that need to be made (Christian, 2006). When educators use family systems theory, change in boundaries, roles, rules, hierarchy, climate, and equilibrium should be seen as important features of family life. When change occurs in any one of these six areas, it is especially significant because it can be seen in behaviors that occur in schools. Within each category, the change can be big or small. But due to the uniqueness of each family the change might be displayed in different ways.

Huitt (2006) recommended that in today's society the need has grown for educators to develop a more holistic approach when educating children. He stated that when trying to encourage children to become successful adults in the 21st century, it is important to not only pay attention to academic issues, but to also encourage growth in other aspects of the child's development. For example, developing children's capacities in the emotional, social, and moral character domains provides the foundation upon which to build strong marital relationships and parenting skills. Additionally, educators should consider the need to create an effective developmental ecology where families, the community, and the school system are involved.

There are three activities in which schools can take proactive action to prepare children and youth for marriage and child rearing: (1) helping children to develop competency skills in relationships, (2) helping children to learn parenting skills, and (3) providing support for families while adjusting to change within them are three ways that professionals in education can serve children while promoting an even and complete development.

Developing Competency Skills in Relationships

Preparing children for mate selection, successful spousal relationships, parenting, and changing family patterns involves the development of a set of intermediate competencies such as empathy, compassion, communication, and solving problems nonviolently. Educators should also foster bonding in young children. These skills are essential when trying to initiate and maintain relationships. Vessels (1998) stated that people with moral character, especially integrity, are predisposed to: (1) show kindness and compassion with empathetic understanding; (2) show the courage to be honest and principled irrespective of circumstances; (3) acquire a wide range of abilities that enable them to independently resolve problems, analyze situations where moral values and principles may be in conflict, and adapt to change in a personally and socially constructive manner; and (4) display a high level of effort in their daily work, and a high level of commitment to individual and group goals and standards.

Many of these skills can be and are already integrated in school lessons. However, helping students to develop emotional awareness, empathy, and respect for diversity in a parenting education program can also have the immediate result of creating a more cooperative classroom environment (Schiffer, 2002). Through secure, nurturing, empathetic relationships with caregivers, children learn how to communicate, have intimate relationships, communicate their wants and needs, and recognize their own wishes to develop constructive relationships with peers and other adults. They also learn to recognize the difference between appropriate and non-appropriate behaviors which, in turn, increases their ability to focus on their academic tasks. Teaching personal relationship skills that develop emotional literacy is crucial to both daily interactions with family members and peers as well as virtuous parenting.

Empathy and caring are seen as traits needing to be enhanced for children to break any patterns of child abuse, neglect or violence they may have experienced. Psychological research indicates that many youth who commit violent crimes have not developed empathy (Schiffer, 2002). Young males, who are inundated with violent images from sports and entertainment and not taught to express warmth and caring, are at risk for failing to feel comfortable with their emotions, especially with showing empathy towards others. This is a factor associated with an increase in criminal behavior.

Additionally, teaching children and teens nonviolent ways to solve conflict assists in sharpening their abilities to communicate their needs and to resolve difficulties without them

having to resort to violence. Such training is valuable especially for those children who do not have positive role models in their home lives. Self-reflections are also critical when teaching parenting skills. Those who are raised in a dysfunctional family situation can gain insight into their family dynamics and learn to develop resiliency and independent thinking to overcome their negative experiences, enabling them to make healthier decisions in the present and later in life (Schiffer, 2002).

Finally, fostering bonding can help children and youth develop the skills that result in the establishment and maintenance of relationships. Wentzel and Erdley (as cited in Brehm et al., 2003) stated there are five strategies in which students need to engage in order to foster relationships. These five strategies are: (1) initiating interaction, (2) being nice,(3) engaging in pro-social behavior, (4) having respect for others, and (5) providing social support. Similarly, maintenance strategies that Stafford and Canary (as cited in Brehm et al., 2003) derived are: (1) being positive and cheerful, (2) engaging in openness, (3) providing assurances, (4) engaging in social networking, (5) sharing tasks, (5) joining in group activities, (6) engaging in mediated communication (keeping in touch without face-to-face contact), and (7) finding humor. Many of these strategies can be first initiated in classroom activities or encouraged by teachers during recess or lunch periods.

Helping Children and Youth to Acquire Parenting Skills

Children and youth also need to be prepared for ways to parent effectively. This is an important skill that the parents are often responsible for teaching. However, with the increasing rate of divorces and single-family homes, this is an area that the school system should assist society with teaching (Schiffer, 2002). Today's youth need to be able to recognize the importance of being involved with someone, caring for them, and also becoming prepared to be mothers and fathers. Becoming aware of parenting responsibilities, including the need to provide guidance, love, and positive discipline as well as developing the financial resources needed to care for a family is important.

Teaching elementary-school students how to be good parents may sound premature or even inappropriate. After all, children need large doses of parenting themselves. But the skills involved in good parenting—shaping values, negotiating conflict, communicating, knowing right from wrong, responsibility, patience, and teamwork—make for successful friends, students, siblings, colleagues, and spouses (Schiffer, 2002). A caring human being does not equal a good parent. But learning and practicing these life skills helps to create effective, productive, nurturing, and responsible human beings who will have the tools for good parenting.

Popkin (2002) provided some alternative terms for the three parenting styles discussed previously: the active (authoritative), the dictator (autocratic/authoritarian), and doormat (passive). The style which encourages positive and more successful outcomes in school with children is the active (authoritative) style. Active parents help their children learn survival skills for surviving in a democratic family, four skills stand out:

1. Courage - If children have courage (in combination with support and guidance from parents), they can try, fail, and try again until a challenge is mastered. Courage is a strong base for children and can be considered as a core of a personality because it builds self-esteem, the heart of a child's potential.

2. Self-Esteem - Simply put, self-esteem is how someone feels about him- or herself. If esteem is high, a person views him- or herself as capable and able to succeed, with courage to try new things. When unsuccessful in a task, a person with high self-esteem looks at the experience as an opportunity to learn.
3. Responsibility - In active parenting, parents are leaders who encourage cooperation and stimulate learning. All family members make decisions and accept responsibility for those decisions -- that is, experience the consequences following a decision. Parents will not always be there to tell a young person what to do. If children and youth have learned to make responsible decisions and have the courage to stick with those decisions, however, they are ready to meet life's challenges on their own.
4. Cooperation – a child or youth who can cooperate with others learns that life involves teamwork. In a society of equals, a child who can cooperate is more likely to survive. A parent-child relationship should be one of cooperation, not conflict. That cooperation must be won through many family experiences.

Surrounding children and youth with parents, teachers, schools, and community members who lead authoritatively will allow children to grow into effective spouses and parents in the future.

Providing Support for Families While Adjusting for Change

External assets outside of school are needed for today's youth (Benson, Galbraith, & Espeland, 1994; Huitt, 2006; Lerner, & Benson, 2003) and why it is important for schools, families, communities, religious organizations, and the media to work together in fostering development in children. According to Patterson (2002), schools and other agencies effective in advocating for policies for children need to help insure that there are adequate resources in the ecological context to help families become resilient and protect themselves against negative change. For example, schools need to continue to be creative, accountable, and prepare young children for future success so that future families can fulfill their functions.

Christian (2006) agreed that educators need to be more cognizant of what is occurring within families rather than thinking that it is irrelevant to their classrooms/ schools. Many professional organizations in education have also recently begun to emphasize the importance of working with families as well as children. The following are nineteen specific recommended ideas for working with families in a school situation:

In the Classroom

1. Balance children's activities and curriculum to incorporate both individual and group identity.
2. Give children ample opportunity for role play, in both structured and unstructured situations.
3. Observe children carefully as many behavior problems are due to role-bound activities.
4. Make distinctions between home rules and school rules.
5. Watch for unspoken rules on how we treat one another (especially in regards to gender or power) and discuss them with care.

6. Note the signs that a hierarchy is in the process of changing. (Bobby might not lead in discussions in class like he used to because an older stepbrother has taken his place in charge of the younger siblings).
7. Watch for hierarchies emerging in the classroom and on the playground. Try to encourage leadership and diffuse bullying by alternating and varying activities and the parts that each student plays.
8. Create a classroom climate of safety, positive feedback and guidelines, and healthy sensory experiences.
9. Provide as much consistency as possible when you are aware of changes in a family (death of a family member, recent move, new baby). Sometimes being stable and secure in the classroom can provide examples for students who do not see it anywhere else.

Working with Families

10. Avoid stereotyping both families and children.
11. Respect families' need for control when introducing new ideas, materials, or experiences to children.
12. Recognize different parenting styles and family boundaries.
13. Recognize that for some families everything is a family affair.
14. Help families recognize their child's many and varied strengths.
15. Ask for families' input and assistance when conflict arises over rules.
16. Encourage families to plan ways to increase stability and security (having routines such as: reading a book at bedtime or talking about the day's events).
17. Engage in careful and keen observation of families in order to find out who is in charge. (Who returns the phone calls? How does the child role-play their different family members? Does a child think that a male teacher is the boss of the female teachers?)
18. Provide opportunities for families to discuss their beliefs about children.
19. Consider inviting a trained family professional to facilitate discussion when a big change or issue is impacting a number of families.

It has been noted that some children replay the situations that occur at home in the relationships with other students at school. By following many of the above suggestions, educators will begin to have a better awareness of the children and families they serve. This in turn, will help with many classroom/school behavior problems and promote strengths in children and their own future families (Christian, 2006).

Measurement and Evaluation

The vast majority of qualities, attributes, and skills related to successful parenting have been discussed in other papers explaining the Brilliant Star framework. For example, the development in the domain of moral character provides a critical foundation for all human relations (Vessels, & Huitt, 2005). Information on measuring emotional qualities such as empathy and optimism was discussed in the paper on affect and emotion (Brett, Smith, Price, & Huitt, 2003). Likewise, information on assessing one's developing competence related to

internal motivation and self-regulation was discussed in the paper on conative development (Huitt, & Cain, 2005).

However, there are some specific issues that directly pertain to marriage and family. Although there is no specific way to measure family development in schools, needs assessments could be done throughout the year by school personnel in order to find out what children and their families needs. In addition, many of the following questions could be answered:

- Have the students demonstrated that they have developed and implemented an activity on which others truly depended?
- Have the students acquired knowledge of how human beings grow and develop and how to facilitate this?
- Have the students completed any investigations of their own families in terms of the styles of parenting and relationships that they have grown up with?

These are certainly issues that should be addressed in any holistic education program.

Summary and Conclusions

Successfully establishment and maintenance of a family is a complex, yet vital, task if a society or culture is expected to grow and prosper. It is possible for young people to complete a high school or college program and never receive specific training on the prerequisite skills and knowledge to do accomplish this. Most societies seem to assume that these skills will develop naturally as part of a young person's experience as they are not part of the explicit school curriculum (McEneaney, & Meyer, 2000), yet the data on divorce and social problems suggest this is not working (Heatherington, 2002; Wallerstein, 2002). Schools need to address this important issue and work with families and communities to prepare young people to be more successful in the future than their parents are today. Continued neglect in adequately preparing children and young people for family life is simply not a viable option.

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